

Minutes of the Board of Library Trustees – June 5, 2007 – 7 PM
Brookline, NH

Present: Eleanor Amidon	Jodi Tochko
Russell Heinselman	Alternates:
Loring Webster	Rebecca Allen
Ed Cook	John Lindgren
Helen Ballou	

Woofie (Eleanor Amidon) opened tonight's meeting by stating that there wasn't an agenda available.

One purpose of the meeting was to discuss an unauthorized evaluation form that was emailed by Loring Webster, a Brookline Public Library Trustee, to two former employees and to discuss his request to them to fill out a performance review on the director. The Board would also meet with Rebecca Brown and Jane Nikander, the children's librarians who had recently resigned.

Loring requested a public session. Woofie passed out copies of Loring's e-mail and the attached evaluation form, titled Brookline Public Library Staff Performance Evaluation. There was a discussion of Loring's conduct and alleged misrepresentation of the library and board. He had not discussed sending the e-mail with anyone else on the board and no one had asked him to send it. It was a standard form from a previous job that he had tailored to the Library. He had given it to Jodi two years ago. It had been discussed at a trustees meeting and was not included in the employee handbook. Loring believed that if the performance reviews were in place, then the resignations would not have occurred. The Library Board had not formally adopted an evaluation program. The request to evaluate the Director was outside the process. The form itself was not reviewed.

At 7:30 p.m., the meeting moved to a discussion of Jane Nikander and Rebecca Brown's grievances. They also requested a public forum. Jane's issues were: no pro-activity, no grievance policy, issues with work delegation, lack of education and unprofessionalism by the Director, her own lack of trust in the Board, her inability to approach the Board, lack of educational opportunities, past handling of grievances by the Board, strict library policies, and no accountability for the Director.

Rebecca B. had the same concerns as Jane, but she also included the loss of staff, handling/filling of vacant positions, and the treatment of employees by the Director.

Several questions and concerns were raised:

There was a discussion of policies and procedures. Linda Hersey of Brookline asked that the Board make it a priority to put policies and procedures in place.

Laurie Hestad of Brookline asked if the library board was part of the town government and asked where people went for review. Tracey Swope had concerns about the loss of staff at the library. Pat Fickett of Brookline, the former BPL Assistant Director for six years, stated that she couldn't support the management style of the board and the director. Pat, Jane and Rebecca all stated they felt they were not allowed to approach the board. Pat stated that she had approached the trustee's chair in 2004 regarding these same issues and no action was taken. She is currently an assistant librarian at another library and also enrolled in a Master's program for Library Science. Joe Brown of Brookline pointed out that everyone presented good points and positives could be said about everyone. He was concerned about the impact that the resignations would have on the children in town. Jane and Rebecca B.'s efforts were acknowledged. Madge Smith of Brookline agreed with Joe and there was a discussion of the necessary skills of a children's librarian.

There was a discussion of the hiring process and who was responsible for hiring library staff. The Board of Trustees is responsible for hiring the director. The director is responsible for hiring the staff under consultation with the Trustees. Jodi, who is the current director, gave a rundown on the procedure that was followed for hiring Betsy and Debra last August.

There are two positions in the children's section of the library: 1 for 16 hours, 1 for 22 hours. Currently, a volunteer-sub has shown interest in the 16 hour position. The applicant was offered the 16 hour position through the in-house hiring policy. The candidate could officially take it at the end of August. Only 1 position, the 22 hour position, is currently available. It will be advertised shortly. Several inquiries have been made about it. Eight subs and more volunteers have come on board recently. Linda Hersey had a follow-up question concerning clarification of the in-house hiring policy and the qualifications of candidates. The board consults with the director on her choice for positions. There was some confusion concerning whether or not the Board had consulted with the Director yet on the 16 hour position. The Board had not. There was a discussion of hiring procedures, the Director's interviewing process, liability issues, background checks, and job qualifications. Joe Brown asked if there was a set of questions in place for hiring or a policy in place to avoid liability issues if a candidate felt that he/she wasn't treated fairly. Jodi stated that she primarily used the applicant's resume for the focal point of the meeting. Those with no library background or those who could not fulfill the requirements backed out on their own. Pat Fickett asked what the focus was for interviewing. Jodi stated that experience and education are stressed. Rebecca Allen explained that background checks probably had not been done in the past but probably should be.

Tracey Swope asked the Board to create specific qualifications for each position and specific procedures for the hiring process and grievances. Linda Hersey offered her services in the future for consultation as she is in the human

resources field. It was pointed out that an Employee Handbook was available but that it contained no grievance procedure.

There was a discussion about library media specialists and the importance of skills and job specifications. June Kramarczyk of Brookline is a library media specialist. She stated that HR is a very large piece in a library. Each position has a scope and sequence of skills; match the person to the position; the skills don't change. She didn't hear that there were any job specifications. She suggested consulting with a certified, library media specialist. John Kramarczyk of Brookline, who is in the HR field, added that he personally sees systemically two issues:

1. Why did 3 employees leave?
2. The Trustees themselves are fractionalized. There are two divisions. Some sort of team building needs to be done to solidify the Board.

There was a discussion about library education and available services. Pat Fickett stated that she had worked at the BPL for a long time without a library education. There is a lot available that isn't known or utilized at the library. Library education is seen as important criteria. A question was raised by Madge Smith, concerning whether or not anyone in the library or on the Board had an MLS (Master's of Library Science). No, not since Claudette, 3 directors back.

There was a discussion about education requirements. Jodi has taken modular classes offered by the State Library and other classes. Jodi's educational background was discussed. She does not have a Bachelor's degree.

Where the job postings were made/could be made was discussed with the merits of library specific internet sites highlighted.

There was a discussion about discovering new information, ideas, information technology, and in which direction the library would be heading in the future. Nicole Karlsson of Brookline offered that an MLS is about so much more than just books. It's about a lot of new ideas as well. She hoped that the Library and all those involved would be on a new wave of information and ideas. She spends time with her family in Sweden where libraries are highly supported. June Kramarczyk stated that a library is not just a house for books any longer. A library is information technology and skills are needed to aid patrons with it. Jane and Rebecca spoke about important skills needed by a children's librarian. Pat Fickett commended them for their efforts.

Whether or not Jane and Rebecca would return was discussed. Jane would want to see many changes made plus a turnaround in the Board. Rebecca doesn't usually return to former positions.

There was a discussion concerning the Trustees' availability and concern over the extent of their interest in employees' concerns. Lisa Proulx of Brookline thanked everyone for listening to each other.

Tracey Swope acknowledged that many issues were brought up. She suggested setting timelines and establishing job qualifications and policies. She hoped that the Board would discuss the hiring process before bringing anyone new on board.

Joe Brown asked the board to take the time to see what Jane and Rebecca had accomplished, how they had impacted the community, and acknowledge that mistakes were made on both sides.

Ed suggested summer meetings and an on-line forum for the trustees. NH-right-to-know laws were discussed. Russ explained that while it's technically feasible, it's not recommended as it is a current issue in the NH legislature. The Board currently follows the conservative approach of not using e-mail or other electronic technology.

Agendas and who sets them was discussed. Ed asked who sets the agenda. Loring asked about the preferred way to contact Woofie. Meeting dates are posted on the internet right away. Agendas are not posted until at least 24 hours in advance at the Library and Town Hall, due to possible last minute changes. Woofie, the Chairwoman, sets the agenda. The best way to reach Woofie would be to call her. All of the Trustees' phone numbers are listed in the telephone book.

Ed inquired about discussing action items and setting priorities. He would like the minutes of this meeting early. Russ recommended posting draft minutes on the Library website.

Ed is in favor of placing his home e-mail address on the library website. Russ explained that there is a SPAM issue tied to personal information on the internet.

Woofie requested that everyone bring in a list of 5 priorities to the next meeting for discussion.

The two open positions were briefly discussed before going into non-public session.

Joe Cote from The Telegraph asked for an interview with the Director if the non-public portion didn't last too long.

At 9:25 p.m., Russ moved to close the public session and hold a non-public session in accordance with RSA 91-A:2 II (b). Helen seconded.

During the non-public session:

Loring moved that all hired positions beyond subs be posted and no offer will be extended until the Board has agreed with the Director's recommendation. Russ seconded.

During discussion it was confirmed that this motion was in line with the BPL's policy in the employee handbook. Motion passed unanimously.

It was decided, after discussion, that criminal background checks would be made on all employees, including substitutes, because any employee could be assigned to work the children's room.

Russ moved to hire Karina Bertrand at Grade 4, Step 2, contingent upon a background check, as Children's Program Coordinator. Helen seconded. Motion passed.

During discussion Ed asked if it needed a majority to pass it. Yes. The motion passed with four yeays. Ed requested that his nay vote be explained: A wider search would be better. He has nothing against the candidate.

Russ moved to adjourn the non-public session at 10:45 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Returning to the public session:

Russ moved to see recorded in the public session that we have hired Karina Bertrand subject to a NH criminal background check and state that, no offers will be extended until the Board has agreed with the Director's recommendation. Furthermore, requiring that all paid positions except subs will be posted and all future hires will require a NH criminal background check. Loring seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Regular business including minutes of the previous meeting and the Treasurer's report will be carried over to the next meeting.

Upon motion by Loring, seconded by Ed, the meeting was adjourned at 10:55 p.m.

The next regular meeting will be held June 26, 2007 at 7 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

N. Loring Webster